

# Marconi on the War Needs and Ideals of Italy

## Wireless Telegraph Inventor Tells How America Can Help His Country—He Thinks Submarine Problem Still Unsolved

SOMETHING of what it meant to the world to have Italy in the war, with a word of explanation as to the purpose of the Italian Mission to this country, was told by Senator William Marconi, a member of that mission, in the course of an interview for THE NEW YORK TIMES at Washington. The mission arrived in Washington about ten days ago and will visit New York early next week.

"Our declaration of neutrality on Aug. 3, 1914," said the wireless inventor, "was at the very outset of distinct military advantage to France, because it enabled her immediately to release something like four hundred thousand troops along her Italian frontier and send them north, where they were so urgently needed to oppose the German advance. That neutrality might have continued had this been an ordinary war, waged as civilized nations had been supposed to wage war before Germany demonstrated her own new way of devastating a neutral country, whose neutrality she herself had guaranteed, her own way of frightfulness that was unthinkable previous to the Summer of 1914. It was their horror of this thing which the Italians felt in common with the rest of the world, plus the traditional resentment of Austria's holding our land, that finally brought my country into the war. It is not fair to Italy to believe that anything less than this, that anything sordid, was her ruling, dominating motive in joining the Allies.

"To satisfy Italy one of the results of this war must be the restoration of her provinces still under Austrian domination. But, as I already have told you, Italy would have gone into the war if there had been no provinces to regain. Any independent nation would have done the same thing—America has done it. The difference in time that elapsed between Italy's declaration of war and that of the United States may be accounted for largely by the difference in distance from the horrors of the war.

"As to our technical military problems, Italy has the most difficult front in Europe. It is 540 kilometers long, and much of it over mountains 10,000 feet in height. To maintain this and to advance our lines, as the Italian armies have been doing very vigorously since the arrival of this mission in America, we have 4,000,000 men under arms at the present time. But at the beginning of our participation, which was at a time when things were not going well with the Allies, (that is significant of our motives,) we were able to send enough men to the frontier to force Austria to divert 300,000 men from her operations against the then retreating Russians. Our entry into the war at that particular moment made the Russian retreat less disastrous than it otherwise would have been. That has been, for the most part, the nature of the military service which Italy has rendered her allies. She has kept engaged hundreds of thousands of troops who but for Italy would have been available for operations on the west and east fronts. In that way we were



Senator William Marconi, Before Coming to America with Italy's Commission, Was on Active Duty in the Army.

an important factor in making possible the advance of Brusiloff.

"And at the same time we helped Russia in another way, which I now mention for the first time. We gave her in time for use in the Brusiloff advance 300,000 rifles, millions of cartridges to fit them, and thousands of motor lorries for her transport service. Some of these muni-

tions we shipped to Brest, whence they were sent on by way of Archangel. Some were purchased by us in America and sent direct to Russia.

In connection with this service which Italy had rendered to Russia, Senator Marconi showed the following letter which he had received from the late Earl Kitchener:

War Office,  
20th December, 1915,  
Dear Sir William  
Marconi:

I am glad to learn from your letter of the 6th inst. that you have been so successful in your efforts to organize the manufacture of cartridges for the rifles which your Government has lent to Russia. General Delmé-Radcliffe has told me how invaluable your influence and advice have been, and I thank you most heartily for the great trouble which you have taken in this matter. It is of great value to know that I may rely on further help from you should the occasion arise, and I greatly appreciate your kind offer.

The question of the shipment of the cartridges from America is being gone into, and arrangements will probably be made to include them in shipments of other Russian supplies from that country. Perhaps it will be more convenient if we communicate direct with the Italian War Office on this point as soon as we are in a position to make a definite proposal.

With renewed thanks for all your help, believe me, yours very truly,  
(Signed)  
KITCHENER.

"Our naval situation in this war," resumed Senator Marconi, "is curiously like that of England with reference to the German fleet. Our navy is stronger than that of Austria, but we cannot get at the enemy fleet. It is kept bottled up

in the many harbors on the east shore of the Adriatic, where we cannot reach it because every harbor is heavily mined. That is the coast, a part of which at least must eventually belong to Italy, which once did belong to Italy before Austria took it away from us. We have no harbors on the west shore of the Adriatic. So far as this war is con-

cerned, however, Austria might as well have no fleet. She dares to send out nothing but her submarines."

His allusion to the submarines, of course, recalled the recent rumors to the effect that Senator Marconi had devised something which would render the submarine useless.

"No," he replied regretfully, "we have not found the way to eliminate the submarine. We have made some useful discoveries in that direction, and we are working on them, but the submarine is like tuberculosis. You can fight it, you can lessen its ravages, but you cannot cure it altogether. The chances are still against the ship that comes within striking distance of the torpedo."

Naturally enough, the inventor of the wireless did not care to say more about what he had invented to lessen the ravages of the submarine, so he made a statement that will never give any aid or comfort to the enemy. It was this:

"The purpose of this mission to America, of which I happen to be a member, is primarily to pay the respects of our country to President Wilson and to assure you all, through him, what a tremendous confirmation of all our faith of the last two years it is to have this nation of a hundred million people come to make common cause with us.

"We also intend to tell you how you can help us in many material ways other than your participation with troops and fleets. We need your coal and wheat and shipping now, but beyond that we hope to demonstrate to you that Italy will need your enterprise and capital after the war to do what the Germans have done heretofore in developing our industries. We want America to come to Italy to help us solve our industrial problems, as so many hundreds of thousands of our people have been coming to America to help you solve your problems by furnishing the labor. I believe that this emigration to America will be resumed as soon as the war is over, for even then Italy will have a surplus population. But in return for that we need your money and your organizing and inventive ability. Let a better understanding between the countries in these matters be one of the products to grow out of the war. Let the word America in Italy stand for what the word Germany has stood for, in a business way, in the past.

"For the emergency of the war I believe we can get along with our food problems by continuing our two meatless days a week and countless other economies we have been forced to adopt. But our coal problem is much more serious. Under normal conditions we use eleven million tons a year, most of which we have got from England, some from America. But now it is almost impossible to get it because of the submarines and the lack of available shipping. The danger is that this will eventually hamper us in the making of munitions for ourselves and our allies and in the railway transportation of troops. We long since cut our passenger train service down by 50 per cent. to conserve the railroad resources for freight and soldiers."